Testimony of Lisa Short
Middle School Teacher
Montgomery County, MD Public Schools

For

Committee on Education & Labor

U.S. House of Representatives

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Future of Learning Hearing
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Good morning Chairman Miller, Congressman, and guests. I am honored to have this opportunity to demonstrate how technology has transformed the educational experiences of my students and how it has drastically improved my ability to teach students with various learning styles and needs. I am currently teaching 8th grade science at Gaithersburg Middle School in Montgomery County, Maryland. My school has a very diverse population of students and is considered to be a highest need school.

Technology plays such a critical role in my students' every day social lives and it must be a part of their academic lives. When my students walk into school they are carrying cell phones, iPods, video games, and sometimes laptops. The first thing they are told to do is "power down." They are asked to keep all of this technology in their lockers so instructional time is not interrupted. Two years ago they walked into a classroom that only had a chalkboard and an overhead projector. That is no longer the scenario at my school.

I am happy to share that since the integration of technology in my classroom and at my school, student engagement has increased along with academic successes. I would like to share a student success story with you. Alan Vera Lopez is an English Language Learner who is currently reading at a 3rd grade level. His grade at the end of the first marking period was a 63 percent. At this point in time, I was still learning how to use the interactive board effectively in my classroom. As the year progressed, and as I improved my skills with the technology, my lessons became more interactive. By the end of the school year his grade had improved from a 63 percent to a 75 percent.

How did this happen? When you use a Promethean board, student engagement increases. Every student, including Alan, wanted to come up to the board during my lessons to demonstrate their knowledge and show off their skills. Whenever I incorporate a "drag and drop" page, every hand goes up in the air. They all want to participate. I have to use a random number generator to ensure that everyone has an equal chance of getting selected to use the wand. Using this technology has greatly improved my relationship with students. I like to use sound bites from movies that students have seen to provide positive reinforcement when they answer correctly on the interactive board. These small touches show students that I am making an effort to relate to their interests. In my experiences, academic success increases when these types of connections are made.

The interactive board allowed me more opportunities to address the different learning styles of students. I was able to integrate visual, kinesthetic (movement), auditory, and tactile (touch) processes into a single lesson. For my English Language Learners, the use of diagrams, pictures, and videos were essential for their comprehension of the curriculum. During a lesson discussing the theory of continental drift, students were able to come up to the board to manipulate

landmasses like pieces of a puzzle, in order to create the supercontinent Pangaea. A great deal of paper was saved that day.

How has this improved my teaching? At the tips of my fingers, I have access to resources that I can use to prepare my lessons. I can download video clips from Discovery Education, include a diagram from the teacher's edition of our textbook, use images from the Internet, or can use published lessons developed by other teachers. I am able to make my lessons rigorous and differentiated to meet individual student's needs. I'm excited to develop lessons again. My husband is also a teacher, and we have an unspoken competition as to who can create the best flipchart.

I use activote questions to assess students' prior knowledge. I have immediate feedback as to the foundation that I am getting ready to build upon. When I begin teaching a unit, I use the activotes in anonymous mode so students don't feel intimidated when they don't know the correct answer. After my lesson, the data from the activotes allowed me to process my students' feedback efficiently. It enabled me to make "at-the-moment" decisions as to whether or not my students understood the information or if I had to re-teach before moving on to the next topic in my curriculum.

Finally, with this technology, our students have greater access to resources at home. I can post my assignments, notes, and lessons on Edline. Every student and parent in Montgomery County has access to Edline, which allows them to monitor grades, determine when an assignment is due or when an assessment will be. If students miss a day of instruction, they can log on and print the lesson from that day. Parents have a better understanding of what is taking place in the classroom and can look at lessons and help their child with their homework. Not only can we increase engagement in our schools, we can hopefully increase engagement at home.

Thank you for allowing me this unique opportunity to share my successes throughout the past year. It has been a learning experience for not only for the students, but for teachers and parents as well. Through professional development and trainings, this technology can truly change the profession of teaching.